



"Leadership in Public School Governance"

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 FAX: 608-257-8386

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources

FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director

DATE: November 18, 20009

RE: **Assembly Bill 578**, relating to healthy and environmentally sensitive cleaning

For the reasons outlined below, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) **opposes** Assembly Bill 578 in its current form.

The WASB believes schools should be **encouraged** to use so-called green cleaning products and green cleaning systems. The WASB has long been involved in efforts to address asthma and allergy-related health concerns in school environments.

Certainly, encouraging school districts to use environmentally sensitive cleaning products and methods is a good thing from an air-quality and asthma-friendly schools perspective.

However, in our view there is a distinct difference between encouraging the use of such products and systems and prescribing or directing the use of such products of systems. This is of particular concern with a bill as sweeping in its scope as AB 578.

It is unclear whether additional costs would be associated with the passage of this bill. At a time when the state is both cutting aid to school districts and reducing school district's allowable revenue we are concerned about costs. Because this bill came up quickly for a hearing we have been unable to fully research this aspect. We strongly urge the committee to more thoroughly study potential costs before this bill is allowed to move forward.

This bill creates a council on healthy and environmentally sensitive cleaning; however, this council does **not** include a representative who is either: a school facilities manager—someone with professional expertise in maintaining school buildings and responsible for overseeing the use and application of cleaning products and systems; or a local elected official, such as a school board member, who sets local district policies and who will be responsible for levying local taxes to pay for the increased costs that may be associated with the bill.

If, as other witnesses have described, the purpose of this bill is to advance the conversation in this area, we offer a suggestion specifically related to how to facilitate that discussion regarding schools.

Recently, the Legislature passed and sent to the governor, Senate Bill 41, relating to indoor environmental quality in public and private schools. That bill directs the state superintendent of public instruction to establish an Indoor Environmental Quality in Schools Task Force consisting of the state superintendent, the secretary of commerce, the secretary of health services, and eleven members representing various school or health-related groups and associations, including parents of pupils.

Senate Bill 41 directs the task force to make recommendations to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for the development of a model management plan for maintaining indoor environmental quality in public and private schools. Based on the task force findings and recommendations, DPI must establish a model management plan and practices for maintaining indoor environmental quality in public and private schools. Once the model plan is established, each school board (and the governing body of each private school that participates in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program) must implement a plan for maintaining indoor environmental quality in its school or schools.

Assembly Bill 578 could preempt the task force's work with respect to the impact of cleaning products on indoor environmental quality in schools. The WASB was involved in the development of SB 41 and **supported** the passage of SB 41.

The task force created by that bill will include occupational health physicians or allergists, and industrial hygienists, architects who design schools and professional engineers who design mechanical systems for school, among others. We believe this task force should consider all of the factors that affect indoor environmental quality and complete its work. We are concerned that a good portion of the work of the task force may be pre-empted by this legislation before it even has a chance to convene.

We would support amending this bill to direct the DPI task force created by SB 41 to review the subject matter raised by AB 578— healthy and environmentally sensitive cleaning—and include the results of this review in its recommendations. We prefer this alternative to the current AB 578 approach that mandates or directs schools to use certain products or systems.

Finally, while this bill appears well-intentioned and its goals are laudable, it is highly prescriptive. We have concerns it could potentially have the effect of “fencing in” certain products and their manufacturers and “fencing out” others by dictating what products and systems must be purchased and utilized. We believe the Legislature should carefully scrutinize any bill that may have the potential to lock in an increased market share for any particular company or set of companies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to discussing possible amendments with you.